

Studies in Christianity Christian Worship #5

S#1.

Beyond the Five Acts

S#2.

Text : **Psa. 22: 25-31 , Heb. 10: 19-31**

A. The concept of preaching that I use is to preach topically in a series.

S#3.

1. Preaching an exposition on a specific text is easy, but leaves too much unsaid.
 - a. In my early years I was a staunch advocate of expository preaching without notes.
 - b. For one who studies, it takes much less preparation time than for topical lessons.
 - c. It eliminates the most difficult decision, “*What will I preach this week.*”
 - d. It makes it possible to preach some sensitive subjects without repercussions.
2. Topical preaching has proven to be much more effective than expository lessons.
 - a. The preacher can plan a balanced spiritual diet for his audience.
 - b. Special needs can be more readily addressed.
 - c. Most any topic is addressed in multiple places in the scriptures.
 - d. One doesn’t have God’s will on a subject until he has heard **all** He has to say on it.
3. Preaching in a series facilitates the learning of the subject being addressed.
 - a. At his retirement party an old preacher made a convincing argument for using series. It keeps the brethren thinking about a subject long enough to apply it.
 * *Monthly, that preacher kept the bible classes and lessons all on the same subject.*
 - b. A well planned series is like shingles on a roof .. each lesson overlaps the previous lesson. (*Repetition is fundamental to learning. The 7 Laws of learning are all “repetition,”*)
 - c. Few topics can adequately be covered with only one lesson.
 - d. My experience with new Christians is that they require series to learn.
4. For the past year I’ve kept each series centered on the fundamentals of Christianity,

S#4.

B. Our previous lesson explored how we established the tradition of “The 5 Acts.”

1. We looked at the attitude of the restorers as opposed to the reformers.
 - a. The reformation movement, though well-meaning, had fostered increasing disunity.
 - b. The restorers advocated purging everything that had gone before and going “Back to the Bible” as their only source of authority.
 - c. They united under the mantra of “Speak where the bible speaks and be silent where the bible is silent.”
2. However, the restorers could not agree on HOW the bible spoke.
 - a. Was it only that which is positively affirmed is permissible.

- b. Or, everything that is not specifically forbidden is permitted.
- c. Some carried over the hermeneutic from the reformation movement.
 - 1) Binding what they viewed as inferences
 - 2) Binding what they viewed as inspired examples
 - * 3) ***These are never binding and cannot be the foundation of a doctrine.***
- 3. The “5 acts” are not commanded, but observed as practiced by the N.T. churches.
 - a. We establish all these from N.T. examples.
 - b. There is NO chapter giving directions as to how to conduct our assemblies.
 - * **I Cor. 14** ... warns us how NOT to conduct an assembly.
- 4. We observed, it is possible to have an assembled worship without all of these 5 Acts.

C. This week we want to look at the actual conducting of an assembly.

S#5.

- 1. The plan is to go over each activity one by one.
- 2. Remember, there are no exact instructions given.
- 3. Each congregation has its own traditions and customs.
 - a. Assemblies are often conducted according to the culture of the church planter.
 - b. In some countries they conduct assemblies very differently than do Americans.

D. We will have a lot of points, but all will be brief.

I. The call to worship.

S#6.

A. In the era of my parents, the congregation was called into the building by a bell.

- 1. The assembly of the church was a social event, much like a family reunion.
- 2. The congregants would socialize outside prior to services.
- 3. Men would imbibe in smoking before going in.

B. Some congregations sing a short song from memory to call the assembly to order.

- 1. The songs are brief and normally praise-centered.
 - a. #108 ... The Lord Is In His Holy Temple
 - b. #101 ... Holy Ground
 - c. #123 ... The Steadfast Love of the Lord (Lam. 3: 22-23)
- 2. The same song is sung every service as a device to officially begin the service.

C. Others recite as a group a verse of scripture.

- 1. **Psa. 95: 6** – Come, let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.
- 2. **Matt. 18: 20** – For where two or three have gathered together in My name,
I am there in their midst."

D. Like us (*most in this area*) some don't use a call to worship. (*Disorderly process*)

1. A call to worship gets the attention of those who are fellowshiping at back.
2. It is a way of doing things "decently and in order." (*saves embarrassment*)

II. The American congregations do singing differently than some.**S#7.****A. We must first observe that the music of the church is NOT for entertainment.**

1. At no point in an assembly should the congregants become an audience.
2. The early Christians had great debate when Greek music was introduced because it was thought to have entertainment value. (*Like a theater drama*)
3. After hundreds of years, mechanical instruments were introduced by Constantine.

B. We Americans put a man in charge of leading the song service.

1. The leader chooses the songs.
2. Hopefully he starts them on pitch and keeps us singing together.
3. Down south it is common for a congregation to hire a song leader.

C. Not all cultures approach the singing the way we do.

1. Some sing in harmony, while setting in a circle. (*U.S. : Whites 4 pt., Black 5 pt.*)
2. Anyone in the group may start a song.
3. In some tribes one man sings a phrase and the group sings it back to him.
(*Sometimes the song is made up as he goes.*)

D. We can sing any way as long as it accomplishes what God wants.

1. **Col. 3: 16** – Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **S#8.**
teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

- a. We must teach and admonish each other with our songs.
- b. The teaching comes from the word that dwells within us.
- c. Our hearts must be thankful to the one who judges our hearts and motives.

2. **Eph. 5: 19** – be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another in psalms **S#9.**
and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody
with your heart to the Lord;

- a. Our songs must result from being filled with the Spirit
- b. Our songs must speak to one another.
- c. We must sing and make the melody in our hearts.
- d. The melody must be addressed to the Lord. (*From the heart to the judge of hearts*)

E. Notice the singing is a communal activity, not a listening event.

III. Preaching can be done in many ways.**S#10.****A. Sermons come in varying lengths.**

1. When I was one the field, they demanded one hour plus.
 - a. The first time I preached on the mission field, I preached two sermons one night.
 - b. Transportation was very expensive so they felt cheated if less than an hour.
2. In some parts of eastern Europe they preach for two and a half to three hours.

B. In many places the sermons are interactive. (*Remember intro: Expository vs topic*)

1. Our black brethren talk to the preacher while he is preaching to encourage him.
2. Likewise, in many places in the U.S. the brethren say AMEN during the lessons.
3. In many cultures the audience interrupts to ask questions during the lesson.
4. I never got used to brethren talking to each other while I was speaking.

C. On the field we had no invitation song; we answered questions after the lesson.**IV. Giving is often disrespected as an act of worship.****S#11.****A. It is more often than not lumped in with the communion.**

1. Almost as if it is an afterthought ... we don't want to overwork the ushers so ...
2. It is very often introduced as our responsibility to pay our share of the bills.
** A sister quit taking the Lord's super; when asked why, she said she had nothing to put in the collection plate. She thought she was paying for communion.*
3. Our tithes and offerings are an expression of our love for God. (*Future lesson*)

B. In many cultures, the brethren go forward to put their contribution in the box.

1. In one church everyone put a coin in the box separate from any paper money so the poor would not be ashamed when they could only afford to put in coins.
2. In one congregation I visited some members brought in commodities. (*chickens, etc*)

V. We come together specifically to partake of the Lord's Supper.**S#12.****S#13.****A. The stated purpose for the Lord's Day assembly is eating the Lord's Supper.**

1. **1 Cor. 11: 20** – Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,
2. The early church assembled on the first day of the week to break the bread.
Acts 20: 7 – On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together **to break bread,** Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

B. All other activities are ancillary to our already being assembled.

1. The collection of tithes and offerings is done while we are assembled to ...

I Cor. 16: 1 – Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. **2** On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. **S#14.**

2. Sermons are delivered while we are assembled on the first day of the week to ...

Acts 20: 7 – On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. **S#15.**

C. The fact that they came together to eat the Lord's Supper every week is a clear statement that the communion should be partaken of every week.**D. Eating the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of faith in the resurrection of Jesus.**

1. **I Cor. 11: 26** – For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. **S#16.**

2. Eating the Lord's Supper without being mindful of His resurrection is curse-worthy.

I Cor. 11: 27 – Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

3. **Therefore**, there is no grounds for closed communion.

CONCLUSION :**A. Clearly, I underestimated the scope of this lesson.**

1. There is still much to cover,
2. Lord willing, we will pick up from here next lesson.

B. With this lesson we have addressed :**S#17.**

1. Using a call to worship
2. Singing in the assembly
3. Styles of preaching
4. Weekly offerings
5. Eating the Lord's Supper

INVITATION :

Lesson Text :

Psalms 22: 25

25 From You comes my praise in the great assembly;
I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.
26 The afflicted will eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the Lord.
Let your heart live forever!
27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord,
And all the families of the nations will worship before You.
28 For the kingdom is the Lord's
And He rules over the nations.
29 All the prosperous of the earth will eat and worship,
All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him,
Even he who cannot keep his soul alive.
30 Posterity will serve Him;
It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation.
31 They will come and will declare His righteousness
To a people who will be born, that He has performed it.

Hebrews 10: 19-31

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; **24** and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **25** not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, **27** but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. **28** Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **29** How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? **30** For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." and again, "The Lord will judge his people." **31** It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.